

TVSportsMarkets

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FOOTBALL

Big CCTV deal puts Infront on course for healthy Asian margin

Frank Dunne and David Cook

- Infront more than triples World Cup fee in China after protracted negotiations with CCTV
- Deals put agency on course to surpass the \$600m it paid Fifa for 2018 and 2022
- Infront yet to sell World Cup rights in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam

The Infront Sports & Media agency looks well placed to earn a healthy margin on its World Cup rights across Asia following this month's deal with Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

CCTV will pay between \$390m (€337m) and \$420m for rights to the 2018 and 2022 tournaments. In the last cycle, covering the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, CCTV paid \$125m.

The CCTV deal takes Infront a long way toward recouping the minimum guarantee of \$600m it paid Fifa, football's global governing body, for 2018 and 2022 World Cup rights across Asia, excluding Japan, Malaysia and South Korea (*TV Sports Markets* 19:6).

Strong fees have also been earned in other markets. In Hong Kong, LeEco – owner of digital streaming service LeSports – is paying \$70m for rights to 2018. In the Indian subcontinent, Sony is paying about \$50m for 2018. Deals are yet to be completed in some important markets, including Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The yet-to-be-announced deal in Indonesia for 2018 and 2022, with the ISM agency, is expected to bring in \$122m.

Selected Infront World Cup deals in Asia

Territory	Buyer	Fee (\$m)	Tournaments
China	CCTV	390-420	2018 and 2022
Indonesia	ISM ¹	122	2018 and 2022
Hong Kong	LeEco	70	2018
Indian subcontinent	Sony ²	50	2018
Myanmar	SkyNet	10	2018 and 2022
	Total	642-672	

Source: *TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker*

¹ Agreed in principle

² Part of a deal for 2014 and 2018 worth \$90m

Infront is paid a 12-per-cent commission on sales up to \$600m. Above that, income is split 80:20 in Fifa's favour. For 2010 and 2014, Infront sold the rights as part of Football Media Services, a joint

venture with Japanese agency Dentsu. FMS paid a minimum guarantee of \$350m for rights in Asia, excluding Japan and Thailand, selling on the rights for more than \$625m.

Monopoly buyer

The CCTV deal is exclusive and covers free-to-air and digital rights in China. Insiders say it is unlikely the broadcaster will sublicense any rights to other parties. CCTV's acquisition of the digital rights is largely a defensive move, designed to protect its free-to-air advertising revenues.

CCTV will simulcast all matches on its official website but advertising rates on the site are far below those on its linear channels.

The agreement required nearly 18 months of negotiations, with one source close to the broadcaster saying there were multiple meetings in which executives were “banging their hands on tables”. The final value is well below Infront's original asking price, but massively above the CCTV's early offers.

One local media analyst said CCTV stood to make a substantial profit from the sale of advertising, despite the increased fee. The broadcaster sold advertising around its World Cup coverage worth about \$151m in 2010 and \$226m in 2014 – a profit margin of more than \$252m across the two events.

Guidelines issued in October 2014 by China's State Council effectively declared the World Cup to be a listed event, leaving only one possible buyer. Despite this, the agency ran an auction for the digital rights in August 2015 and received offers from all the major streaming players (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1).

Offers ranged from \$80m to more than \$500m. Infront was close to signing a deal with LeEco, the highest bidder, before the government intervened and insisted all rights had to be awarded to CCTV.

Although CCTV's fee is lower than that offered by LeEco, the auction provided Infront with a clear idea of the market value of the rights – something it was able to use in its negotiations with CCTV.

By not signing a deal with LeEco, the agency has arguably dodged a bullet as LeEco has since run into serious financial difficulties.

Infront is owned by Chinese conglomerate Wanda Group, but it is thought highly unlikely the company would have been able to exert any political pressure on CCTV. Wanda has come under intense pressure this year from the government to address the scale of its debt.

LeEco questions

In January, LeEco appeared to have alleviated its financial problems by securing CNY16.8bn (€2.31bn/\$2.42bn) in strategic investment, chiefly from property developer Sunac China Holdings. However, the Shanghai High People's Court froze \$180m of the company's assets in July, with chief executive Jia Yueting admitting LeEco's financial predicament was far worse than expected.

Despite LeEco's financial problems, Infront's \$70m deal for World Cup rights in Hong Kong is safe – the company has already paid most, if not all, of the fee. LeEco's fee was a 75-per-cent increase on the \$40m paid by media group TVB for the 2014 rights (*TV Sports Markets* 17:10).

Local sources say LeEco is trying to sell on the rights and is being advised on the process by Chinese sports marketing company Desports.

The other major deal in Hong Kong which LeEco is said to have ring-fenced is its three-season deal for English Premier League rights, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, worth just under \$130m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:17). The company had to secure an irrevocable bank guarantee for the entire value of the contract to get the rights. It remains an active partner of the league and is understood to be up to date with payments.

In China, LeEco has had to sell on some of the rights it had acquired and hand others back to rights-holders.

LeEco rights deals in China terminated by rights-holders

Property	Duration	Total value (\$m)	Status
Chinese Super League ¹	2016 to 2017	391.5	Resold to PPTV
Asian Football Confederation events	2017 to 2020	110	
ATP World Tour	2016 to 2020	100	Resold to iQiyi
International Champions Cup	2015 to 2018	44	Resold to CCTV
English FA Cup	2015-16 to 2017-18	21 to 24	Resold to PPTV and Tencent
Italian Serie A	2015-16 to 2017-18	19.5	Resold to PPTV and Tencent
Wimbledon	2016 to 2018	9	Resold to Tencent
Belgian Pro League	2015-16 to 2017-18		
Brazil friendly matches	2015 to 2018		
England home friendly matches	2015 to 2018		
English Football League rights	2015-16 to 2017-18		
Scottish Professional Football League	2015-16 to 2017-18		

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

¹ Also covered Hong Kong and Macau

Other Infront markets

Indonesia: Infront is thought to be close to a deal with ISM for rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. The deal is said to be worth about \$122m. ISM paid \$96m for rights to 2010 and 2014, split \$41m for 2010 and \$55m for 2014. If confirmed, the new deal would represent an increase of 27 per cent.

Thailand: The Thai government has listed the World Cup for free-to-air coverage, limiting Infront's ability to generate competition. Local sources claim the agency is looking for between \$40m and \$50m from the market. Opinions among local free-to-air broadcasters vary about the value of the rights, from \$12m at the lower end to \$25m to \$26m at the upper end.

Free-to-air digital streaming service PPTV is said to have offered \$26m earlier this year. Some local experts believe the government may step in and buy the rights, but say it would be unlikely to pay more than \$30m.

In the last cycle, Thailand was excluded from the FMS deal. Pay-television operator RS bought the rights through the Football Association of Thailand for a fee thought to be close to \$40m, and sublicensed all matches to rival pay-television operator TrueVisions.

Myanmar: Pay-television operator SkyNet is thought to have agreed a deal worth less than \$10m for 2018 and 2022. This is understood to represent a modest increase on its fee for rights to 2010 and 2014. Local sources say there were no other bidders.

Indian subcontinent: The existing deal in the Indian subcontinent is an anomaly because it straddles two different rights cycles, covering the 2014 and 2018 World Cups. Pay-television broadcaster Multi Screen Media – now known as Sony Pictures Networks India – paid a total of \$90m for the rights, of which about \$50m was allocated to 2018.

The deal is for the whole subcontinent but 85 to 90 per cent of the value is in India. For the 2010 rights, pan-regional pay-television operator ESPN Star Sports paid \$42m.

Vietnam: As in Thailand, the Vietnamese government is intervening to ensure the tournament is shown on free-to-air television, with public-service broadcaster VTV considered the overwhelming favourite to pick up the rights.

For 2014, the MP & Silva agency paid \$10m for the rights, selling them on to VTV for about \$7m. The agency is not thought to have bid this time. Local experts believe VTV is prepared to pay a similar fee in 2018 to what it paid MP & Silva for rights to 2014.

Singapore: The World Cup is subject to cross-carriage regulation in Singapore, meaning neither of the country's two main pay-television platforms, Singtel or StarHub, can acquire the rights exclusively.

In 2010, Singtel and StarHub shared the rights in a deal worth \$17m. Singtel acquired the rights for \$22.5m in 2014, before sublicensing on to media company Mediacorp. Most local experts believe it will be a major challenge for Infront to secure an uplift.

Fifa markets

Japan: Fifa sold the rights in Japan for 2018 and 2022 directly to Dentsu for \$400m. The agency has not announced any deals for 2018 but local sources say a deal is imminent.

Malaysia: Fifa sold the 2018 and 2022 rights in Malaysia to the M-League agency for \$75m. M-League is understood to have agreed a deal for rights to all 2018 matches with the Astro pay-television platform for \$64m. M-League is expected to sell free-to-air rights to about one-third of the matches to public-service broadcaster RTM.

M-League acquired rights to 2010 and 2014 from FMS in a deal worth \$55m. Astro is thought to have paid \$23m for pay-television rights to 2010, and \$28m for 2014. RTM acquired free-to-air rights to about one-third of the matches in 2014 for \$6.5m.

South Korea: Fifa sold rights to 2018 and 2022 in South Korea directly to media group SBS for \$190m. For the 2010-2014 cycle, FMS sold the rights to SBS for \$140m. ◆

Fifa 2018 and 2022 World Cup deals in Asia

Territory	Buyer	Buyer type	Fee (\$m)
Pan-Asia	Infront	Agency	600
Japan	Dentsu	Agency	400
South Korea	SBS	Broadcaster	190
Malaysia	M-League	Agency	75
		Total	1,265

Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

CRICKET

BeIN makes move on to OSN turf with Cricket Australia acquisition

By Robin Jellis

- BeIN acquires Cricket Australia rights in Mena, 2017-18 to 2022-23, for \$3.5m per season
- Cricket Australia rights previously with OSN, 2012-13 to 2016-17, for \$1.5m per season
- Deal follows beIN's unsuccessful \$60.9m offer for IPL rights in the region, 2018 to 2022

BeIN Media Group agreed its first deal for cricket rights last week, marking a notable change in strategy and a clear statement of intent it will go after content traditionally held by its Middle-Eastern rival OSN.

BeIN made its ambition to acquire cricket rights clear during the auction for Indian Premier League rights in September, when it bid a total of \$60.9m (€52.6m) in the Middle East and North Africa over five years, from 2018 to 2022 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:16).

Its offer was by far the highest for IPL rights in the region. Pay-television broadcaster OSN bid \$33m; OTT service YuppTV bid \$15.6m; and Indian pay-television broadcaster Star bid \$10.2m.

BeIN backed up its aggression last week, signing a six-season deal for Cricket Australia rights in Mena. The deal will run from 2017-18 to 2022-23, and will be worth an average of about \$3.5m per season.

The broadcaster's move for cricket rights is a surprise given its intention to focus primarily on premium content, especially top football. But the Qatari company believes securing top cricket rights will diversify its portfolio and enable it to offer new subscription packages to viewers.

TV Sports Markets understands beIN plans to launch a cricket channel in Mena before the end of 2018.

BeIN is understood to have identified cricket as a key sport to help it expand its subscriber base: the content will appeal to Indian subcontinent expats in the region, of which there are about 8m.

Following the Saudi-Arabia led economic blockade imposed on Qatar in June this year, beIN has been unable to add many new subscribers – particularly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – and general pay-television growth in the region is flat. The acquisition of cricket content is seen by beIN as an opportunity to encourage OSN subscribers to migrate to its services.

Despite missing out on IPL rights in the auction, beIN is still keen to acquire some Indian cricket content. It is expected to bid aggressively for rights in Mena to Board of Control for Cricket in India

events when they are offered to the market late this year or early next.

It is understood OSN did not bid for Cricket Australia rights. It is thought to prioritise three main cricket properties: International Cricket Council events, to which it holds rights until the end of 2022-23; IPL rights, which it will try to sublicense from Star following the latter's \$2.55bn deal for global rights from 2018 to 2022; and BCCI rights.

This strategy will be tested in the coming months with a sublicensing deal for the IPL yet to be agreed in the region, and BCCI rights soon to be on the market.

Mena carved out for separate sale

Ahead of its sales process, Cricket Australia was consulted by the Pitch International agency, but Pitch played no role in the negotiations with beIN. The deal was agreed directly between Cricket Australia and beIN – there was no tender.

The sale of rights in Mena was made possible by the fact Cricket Australia had only sold rights in the Indian subcontinent in its deal with pay-television broadcaster Sony Pictures Networks India in October. That deal, also from 2017-18 to 2022-23, will be worth a total of \$95m, an average of \$15.8m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19).

Cricket Australia's previous five-season deal in the region, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, was worth \$155m with pan-regional pay-television broadcaster ESPN Star Sports (ESS). It covered the Indian subcontinent, the rest of Asia, and Mena.

ESS is understood to have sublicensed Cricket Australia rights in Mena to OSN for close to \$1.5m per season across the five seasons.

BeIN's deal with Cricket Australia represents the first time a major cricket body has carved out rights in Mena for a separate sale. Cricket rights-holders have generally sold rights in Mena as part of wider deals for rights in the Indian subcontinent and the rest of Asia, predominantly because of ESS's footprint.

ESS was able to offer cricket rights-holders higher overall fees by acquiring rights in other territories, and could more easily justify its expenditure on rights. Its main rivals for cricket rights at the time – agency Nimbus Communications and pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports – also bid for cricket rights on a pan-regional basis so they could compete with ESS.

Cricket Australia is understood to have adapted its sales strategy for the current cycle as it believes these markets have become more sophisticated, and it is increasingly keen to have direct relationships with its broadcast partners around the world.

BeIN has been lobbying cricket rights-holders for many months to sell their rights separately in Mena.

One cricket rights expert said the ICC could have been the first cricket body to follow this path in October 2014, when it last sold its global media rights. During the ICC auction, both beIN and OSN unsuccessfully bid between \$70m and \$80m for rights in Mena over eight seasons, from 2015-16 to 2022-23.

Global rights were ultimately awarded to Star India and Star Middle East over the eight seasons in a deal worth about \$2.1bn (*TV Sports Markets* 18:19). OSN subsequently sublicensed the rights in Mena over the eight seasons in a deal with Star thought to be worth a total of about \$80m.

Cricket Australia continues shake-up

BeIN agreed a deal with Cricket Australia for six seasons to show a commitment to the governing body and to broadcasting cricket more generally. The term suits Cricket Australia as its deals in Mena and the Indian subcontinent will run concurrently.

The key content for beIN will be the Indian national team's tours of Australia – India will tour Australia at least twice over the term of the contract. India will play: four Test matches between November 2018 and January 2019; and seven One Day Internationals and two Twenty20 Internationals between January and February 2020.

The upcoming Ashes Test series between Australia and England will also provide important content as it will appeal to all cricket fans in the region. BeIN has already begun to promote the upcoming series, which starts on November 23. BeIN's deal covers all Cricket Australia events.

Cricket Australia's deal with beIN means it has switched from its incumbent broadcast partners in three key territories: the UK (from pay-television broadcaster Sky to rival BT Sport); sub-Saharan Africa (from pay-television broadcaster SuperSport to sports broadcaster Kwesé Sports) and now Mena.

A key reason behind these changes is understood to be each broadcaster's commitment to showing events from the wider Cricket Australia portfolio, such as women's cricket and the Big Bash League T20 competition. The body is understood to have minimum requirements for coverage, promotion and marketing in each of its deals.

BeIN hungry for more cricket

TV Sports Markets understands beIN is in talks with the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to acquire rights in Mena in a new cycle from 2017-18 onward.

ESS held ECB rights across all of Asia and Mena in a five-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2016-17, worth a total of \$110m. ESS turned down an option to extend the deal to cover 2017-18 and 2018-19 for a total of \$130m (*TV Sports Markets* 20:10).

ESS sublicensed ECB rights in Mena to OSN for about \$1.5m per season across the five-season period.

It is thought an ECB agreement in Mena would be worth more than beIN's deal with Cricket Australia, as games in England are in a better time zone for a Middle Eastern audience than those in Australia. India will at least tour England between June and September 2018.

For beIN, the combination of the ECB and Cricket Australia deals would give it year-round cricket content from two of the sport's most prestigious boards.

Other cricket board content in Mena

The third of the major Test cricket governing bodies, the BCCI, will sell its rights in the coming months. BeIN will be hoping the body carves out its rights in Mena for a separate sale.

Star currently holds global media rights to all BCCI events in a six-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, worth a total of \$751m (*TV Sports Markets* 16:7). Star sublicensed BCCI rights in Mena to OSN across the same six seasons.

OSN also has a deal with Pitch for New Zealand Cricket rights over eight seasons, from 2012-13 to 2019-20. Pitch distributes NZC matches in all territories outside New Zealand in a deal thought to be worth a total of between \$60m and \$70m across the eight seasons.

OSN shows its cricket content on a dedicated channel, OSN Sports Cricket HD. Its cricket rights strategy was underpinned by its August 2013 acquisition of Pehla Media & Entertainment, which offered about 40 channels in a variety of South Asian languages, and held rights to multiple cricket properties.

The OSN platform also carries the Ten Cricket International channel, which shows cricket content held in the region by Indian pay-television broadcaster Ten Sports – now owned by Sony.

In April 2015, Ten acquired global rights to Pakistan Cricket Board events in a joint deal with Pakistani state broadcaster PTV. The five-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, is worth a total of about \$150m. PTV shows matches in Pakistan while Ten holds rights in all other territories. Ten is paying most of the fee (*TV Sports Markets* 19:7).

Via Ten, Sony holds rights to all Cricket South Africa events across Asia and Mena in an eight-season deal, from 2012-13 to 2019-20, worth a total of \$175m (*TV Sports Markets* 15:23).

It has a global media and production rights deal with Sri Lanka Cricket in a seven-season deal, from 2013-14 to 2019-20, worth a total of \$75m (*TV Sports Markets* 18:5).

Sony also has a seven-season global media and production rights deal with Cricket West Indies, from 2013-14 to 2019-20. It is paying \$65m for the media rights and \$35m in production costs (*TV Sports Markets* 16:20).

Finally, it holds global Zimbabwe Cricket rights in an eight-season deal, from 2011-12 to 2018-19, worth a total of about \$20m. ◆

WINTER SPORT

Infront ties up three deals as IMG plans its next winter sports move

By Robin Jellis

- Infront renews German ski association international rights for €7.5m per season
- Agency also extends IBSF deal, from 2018-19 to 2021-22, for close to €2.5m per season
- Infront renews Ski Sport Finland deal, 2021-22 to 2025-26, for about €800,000 per season

Infront Sports & Media has agreed long-term extensions to three of its winter sports rights deals in a move seemingly aimed at heading off rival agency IMG's ambition in the sector.

Infront has extended deals in the last month with: the International Bobsleigh & Skeleton Federation; the German ski association, the Deutscher Skiverband (DSV); and Ski Sport Finland.

For more than a year Infront has been extending its winter sports contracts, especially its ski association international rights deals, most of which now run until the end of the 2025-26 season.

The latest extensions come as Infront is expected to face a serious challenge for other winter sports rights from IMG, which has agreed (but not yet finalised) a deal for Austrian ski association international rights (*TV Sports Markets* 21:17).

IMG plans for winter sport

Infront and the European Broadcasting Union – Europe's consortium of public-service broadcasters – are the two main buyers of winter sports rights. Both are wary of IMG's aggression: following its Austrian ski association deal it is expected to bid strongly for other winter sports rights.

Most winter sport experts are surprised IMG has chosen to buy rights in a sector Infront has a very strong position in. Holding only Austrian ski association rights means IMG will not have a critical mass of content to offer to broadcasters, which could make sales difficult.

IMG's international rights deal with the Austrian association, the Österreichischer Skiverband (ÖSV), will run for six seasons from 2018-19 to 2023-24, and will be worth a minimum of about €11m (\$12.7m) per season. IMG will share revenues above this with the association.

The deal will cover all Fédération Internationale de Ski (Fis) World Cup events that take place in Austria across all disciplines: alpine, ski jumping, Nordic combined, cross country, freestyle and snowboard.

IMG is understood to have acquired the rights in Germany as part of the deal and sold these on – together with the ÖSV – to German public-service broadcasters ARD and ZDF. That deal is worth slightly more than €3.5m per season over four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22. IMG will work together with the association on all other international rights deals.

Most experts believe the ÖSV deal is part of a wider strategy for IMG to broaden its rights portfolio ahead of an IPO. However, with most other winter sports rights locked up well into the future, IMG has little opportunity to acquire more content.

Another difficulty IMG faces in trying to grow its portfolio is that, as part of many of Infront's long-term deals, it also has matching-rights clauses or windows of exclusive renegotiation with rights-holders.

Despite this, *TV Sports Markets* understands IMG has long-term plans to enter the market and is prepared to be patient. It will look to develop smaller properties in partnership with rights-holders.

IMG is also thought to be confident it can make a profit on its Austrian ski association deal on a standalone basis.

In the long term, some winter sports experts suggest IMG may lobby Fis to centralise its World Cup rights, moving away from the current model whereby national associations sell domestic and international rights themselves. Infront's deals with various associations mean this could not realistically happen before the end of the 2025-26 season.

DSV digital carve-out

Last month, the DSV and Infront agreed a five-season extension to their deal for international media rights, from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

It is difficult to put a specific value on the deal as the World Cup calendar for the duration of the new contract has not yet been determined. But Infront is expected to pay the association a minimum of about €7.5m per season.

This would represent an increase of about 15 per cent on the value of the DSV's current international rights deal with Infront, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, worth just under €6.5m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:9). The previous international rights deal between the same two companies, from 2011-12 to 2015-16, was worth about €6m per season.

In both the current and new deals, Infront shares any revenues above its guarantee with the association.

The rights in the new cycle were not tendered as Infront agreed the renewal in an exclusive negotiating window with the association. The entrance of IMG into the winter sports sector is not thought to have affected the negotiations between Infront and the DSV, as talks between the two over a new deal began more than a year ago.

Stefan Schwarzbach, DSV Marketing chief executive, told *TV Sports Markets*: “The deal with Infront makes sense. We get the security and the flexibility for our World Cups for the next eight to nine years.”

One change between the current and the new deal is that the association will now be able to use highlight clips on its own platforms in markets outside Germany. At present, the association can only use highlight clips rights in Germany.

Schwarzbach said: “The digital rights are important for us, and for our sponsors and partners. We can now use these clips for our own purposes.”

Clips are shown on the DSV website, www.skideutschland.de, and on its social media channels. The DSV has been working on its digital strategy with media agency Lobeco.

The Infront/DSV deal covers all Fis World Cup events held in Germany, of which there are about 25 each season across alpine, ski jumping, cross country, Nordic combined and freestyle.

The contract includes two of the four events that make up the prestigious Four Hills Tournament: Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Oberstdorf (the other two are held in Austria, and these rights are sold by the ÖSV).

DSV domestic rights are held by ARD and ZDF in a four-season deal, from 2016-17 to 2019-20, worth a total of about €9m per season. This is thought to split about 2:1 between rights fee and production costs. The broadcasters have the option to extend the deal to cover 2020-21 (*TV Sports Markets* 20:3).

Infront renews wide-ranging IBSF contract

Infront and the IBSF extended their global media and marketing rights deal by four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22. The agreement will be worth close to €2.5m per season.

Their current agreement, for the four seasons from 2014-15 to 2017-18, is worth slightly more than €2m per season. The federation sells its rights in quadrennial cycles around the Olympic Games.

IBSF rights in the new cycle were not offered to the market – Infront renewed the deal in direct talks with the federation.

The deal includes media, marketing and production rights. Production is thought to account for a large proportion of the total value of both the current and new deals.

The marketing rights are also understood to be relatively lucrative. As such, Infront’s media sales strategy is largely focused on securing free-to-air exposure to help with sponsorship sales.

There is thought to be some broadcaster interest in the IBSF rights on a standalone basis – the strongest market for these rights is Germany. But in most territories, IBSF content is bundled into a wider package of winter sports rights by Infront.

Infront will continue to manage the global distribution of media rights to the men's and women's IBSF World Cup, and both bobsleigh and skeleton World Championships. Infront will also be responsible for the production of all World Cup and World Championship events, plus the sale of sponsorship rights.

The deal is important to Infront as the IBSF is just one of seven Olympic winter sports federations.

Until June 2015 the federation was known as the FIBT: the Fédération Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Tobogganing.

Ski Sport Finland extends with Infront

Infront also extended its international media-rights contract with Ski Sport Finland for five seasons, from 2021-22 to 2025-26, in a deal thought to be worth close to €800,000 per season.

Infront's existing international media-rights contract with Ski Sport Finland, from 2016-17 to 2020-21, is thought to be worth about €650,000 per season.

The deals cover men's and women's alpine and freestyle Fis World Cup events held in Finland. The agreements include alpine World Cup slalom races in Levi and freestyle World Cup events in Ruka.

Ski Sport Finland is the rights-holder of alpine and freestyle skiing events held in the country. Infront first agreed a deal with Ski Sport Finland in 2011 – this is the third deal between the two companies.

Infront and Ski Sport Finland have a close partnership as the agency also markets the association's sponsorship rights.

The Finnish Ski Association sells rights to all Fis World Cup Nordic events held in the country: these rights are also held by Infront in an eight-season deal, from 2018-19 to 2025-26, worth an average of about €4m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:20).

Ski Sport Finland domestic rights are held by Finnish public-service broadcaster YLE in a three-season deal from 2017-18 to 2019-20. The federation is responsible for production costs. ◆

FOOTBALL

Saran reasserts its dominance in Turkey with Europa League buy

By Callum McCarthy

- Saran has acquired Europa League rights in Turkey for about €22m per season
- Deal represents a small decrease on the €23m-per-season allocation in the current cycle
- Champions League rights still on the market, Saran thought to be the likeliest buyer

Saran Media is set to acquire rights to the Uefa Europa League in Turkey for a marginally smaller fee than the governing body's allocation in the current cycle, *TV Sports Markets* understands.

In addition, Saran plans to create its own OTT service to – among other reasons – exploit more than one Europa League match per match-week on its own platforms. Saran is also thought to be in talks with beIN Media Group over a sublicensing deal for some matches.

Saran's provisional three-season deal for the Europa League – which is yet to be signed – will run from 2018-19 to 2020-21 and will be worth about €22m (\$25.5m) per season. It is about four-per-cent less than the €23m-per-season Uefa is thought to have allocated to these rights in the current cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

Tough economic conditions meant any kind of fee growth was improbable. On November 14 the Turkish lira reached its lowest value against the dollar since it was redenominated in 2005.

Pay-television operator Tivibu, which is owned by telco Türk Telekom, holds both Champions League and Europa League rights in the current cycle. Tivibu bought the rights together in a three-season deal, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth €57m per season.

Tivibu is understood to value the Europa League rights exploited on its channels at about €15m per season. It also sublicensed Europa League matches involving Turkish teams and other marquee matches to state broadcaster TRT for between €6.5m and €8m per season, depending on the success of Turkish teams.

One local source said it was only strong local interest – up to five Turkish clubs can play in the Europa League each season – that had held up the value of the property.

Champions League getting close

Bidding for Champions League rights in Turkey has been a slower process, as Uefa and its club competition sales agent Team Marketing have been fighting for an increase.

Uefa is attempting to stand firm on its demand for an increase across both its club competitions, but offers for Champions League rights in the 2018-19 to 2020-21 cycle have not increased from the second to third rounds of bidding (*TV Sports Markets* 21:19).

Local sources believe the value of the rights will decrease modestly from the €34m per season thought to be allocated to the rights by Uefa in the current cycle.

It is understood Tivibu's internal valuation of Champions League rights exploited on its own channels is about €24m per season, with between €8.5m and €10m per season earned from sublicensing two matches per week to TRT, depending on the success of Turkish teams each season.

One source suggested Saran could also be in line to acquire Champions League rights, after which it could agree a sublicensing arrangement with beIN for rights to both competitions. Sources close to the process stressed nothing has been agreed and that negotiations are ongoing.

Joined at the hip

BeIN's interest in acquiring Europa League rights from Saran is conditional – if beIN or Saran fails to win Champions League rights, its interest in the Europa League will be almost zero.

BeIN, which owns pay-television operator Digiturk, wants to offer a complete set of top-tier football rights in Turkey. It already holds global Turkish Süper Lig rights in a five-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2021-22, and English Premier League rights via a sublicensing deal with Saran (*TV Sports Markets* 20:1; 20:20).

Equally, Uefa prefers the Champions League and Europa League to be shown by the same broadcaster. Local experts believe Saran's acquisition of Europa League rights, and its plan to sublicense to beIN, strengthens both parties' positions in negotiations for Champions League rights.

For Tivibu and its parent Türk Telekom, the loss of Europa League rights – and likely Champions League rights, too – will be a colossal blow. These European club football competitions are by far its most attractive sports properties.

Platform game

Saran is expected to exploit at least one Europa League match per match-week on its pay-television broadcaster S Sport. Its planned OTT service would enable it to show all remaining Europa League matches.

An OTT service would allow Saran to better exploit rights already in its portfolio, such as the English Premier League and the NBA.

It would also eliminate much of Saran's need to sublicense content to other broadcasters. It currently sublicenses NBA and Premier League rights to meet each rights-holder's exposure requirements. Local sources say this could help Saran complete more lucrative sublicensing deals – should it still take this route – as it would have the leverage of being able to retain rights for its own service.

The terms of Saran's Europa League deal do not require it to sublicense matches to a free-to-air broadcaster. But Saran's desire to recoup some revenue, as well as demand from the Turkish government and public, is pushing it toward a sublicensing deal with beIN.

BeIN launched a free-to-air channel in Turkey, beIN Sports Haber, on October 25. BeIN Sports Haber (beIN Sports News) currently reaches 90 per cent of Turkish TV households. It is not available on Tivibu or telco Turkcell's IPTV operations – Digiturk's direct rivals.

Much like Saran, beIN has launched the channel to avoid having to agree potentially loss-making sublicensing deals and exploit more content on its own platforms.

Under the terms of its Süper Lig deal, beIN must show weekly highlights and one live second-tier domestic match per week on free-to-air. ◆

BASKETBALL

LNB experiments with exposure as key Globo renewal draws near

By Callum McCarthy

The Brazilian basketball league's renewed deals with Bandeirantes and Facebook, and a new deal with Twitter, will earn the property no rights fees but satisfies the league's immediate needs: production services and worldwide exposure.

Liga Nacional de Basquete, the operator and commercial rights-holder of the top-tier Novo Basquete Brasil domestic league, signed a two-season domestic renewal with commercial broadcaster Bandeirantes in late October, covering 2017-18 and 2018-19. It replaces Band's previous one-season deal, covering 2016-17 only.

Band's new deal covers free-to-air rights to one regular-season game per week, on Saturdays, and one play-off game per week during the post-season. Band pays between BRL40,000 (€10,500/\$12,200) and BRL50,000 in production per game, depending on the venue.

The LNB's one-season renewal with social media platform Facebook, covering global digital rights for 2017-18, is an extension of its previous one-season deal for 2016-17.

The old deal included exclusive live digital rights to 40 games across the regular season and play-offs. The new deal includes considerably fewer: a minimum of 14 exclusive live regular-season games on Thursday nights. The platform could also broadcast play-off games, depending on demand from the league's linear broadcaster partners.

A new one-season deal with social media platform Twitter, also covering 2017-18, will cover most of the games previously shown on Facebook. Twitter will have exclusive global live rights to a minimum of 17 regular-season games played on Friday nights.

Neither Facebook nor Twitter pays the league a rights fee. The league will produce the games the two platforms will show at a cost of about BRL30,000 per game.

Sponsorship is king for the LNB

The league has a 10-season deal with pay-television broadcaster Globosat, from 2008-09 to 2017-18. Globosat's SporTV channel shows one game per week on Tuesdays during the regular season, up to two play-off games per week in the post-season, and has an option to acquire exclusive rights to the NBB Finals.

Globosat is owned by media group Globo, whose commercial broadcaster Rede Globo has previously broadcast play-off matches.

Globosat is thought to have paid a rights fee in the low hundreds of thousands of Brazilian real per season for the first six seasons, as it held exclusive rights across all platforms.

The deal was renegotiated in 2014-15 as the league and its clubs were struggling financially. The league sought wider free-to-air exposure in order to help it agree further sponsorship deals, and assist its clubs to do the same. As such, Globo gave up exclusivity so the league could place more games on free-to-air, stopped paying a rights fee and covered production costs only. Each game Globo show costs between BRL40,000 and BRL50,000 to produce.

With its Globosat deal ending after the current season and no guarantee of a rights fee in any new deal, the LNB is on the cusp of adopting an exposure-focused strategy built solely around free-to-air and live streaming in order to maximise sponsorship revenue.

Sponsorship is by far the NBB's primary revenue stream, and the amount it could earn in an exclusive pay-television deal is far less than it earns from sponsorship deals with commercial bank Caixa, sportswear brand Nike, airline Avianca and pay-television operator Sky.

Álvaro Cotta, commercial and marketing manager at the LNB, told *TV Sports Markets*: "Our sponsors have different strategies, but I think one of our strengths is that we constructed a customised marketing platform. Most of them want exposure on free-to-air TV, but a lot of them want to be more involved on digital, and associate with innovation and interaction."

Sports helps social with targeted ads

Social media platforms believe they are suited to niche properties – like the LNB – whose sponsorship revenue is greater than what they could earn from media rights, and for whom exposure is their chief concern.

By offering niche properties a reliable streaming platform with global reach and the ability to geo-block, they can acquire live sports content with small, loyal consumer bases at no upfront cost.

These small consumer bases – or "communities" as Facebook describes them – are exactly what Facebook is looking to target. Facebook wants these "communities" to form "groups" on the site, thus increasing those users' viewership and interaction with content and each other.

In turn, this increases key metrics such as time-on-site and provides Facebook with user data which it uses to target advertising more effectively. Partnering with Facebook to show live games has enabled the LNB to target its fans and followers with advertising from its sponsors, as well as for LNB merchandise and tickets.

Facebook is keen to expand its new live-streaming platform, Watch, to countries other than the US. Watch is designed to offer the appointment-to-view experience offered by live television that isn't provided by its current streaming platform Facebook Live.

As well as introducing Watch globally, the social media platform plans to increase its rights-holder partners' ability to earn revenue by introducing ad breaks into live streams.

These ads would be selected and placed by the rights-holder, with revenue shared between the rights-holder and Facebook. It is initially expected to offer this service to its paid partner broadcasters such as US pay-television broadcasters Univision Deportes and Fox Sports, before making it available to rights-holders.

"In one year, it's possible social media could be the best platform for our business," Cotta said. "Many other sports leagues are experimenting and trying to understand the best way. We're still learning the potential of social media and what we can implement in terms of technology, so we can increase our revenues." ◆

FOOTBALL

Uefa hoping to emulate Major League Soccer growth in Canada

By Callum McCarthy

- Champions League in Canada worth €5m per season; Europa League €800,000 per season
- Bell holds English-language MLS rights, 2017 to 2021, for between \$4m and \$5m per year
- Rogers holds French-language MLS rights, 2017 to 2021, for \$1m to \$1.5m per year

Uefa is hoping the improved fees and ratings secured by Major League Soccer in Canada indicate a rising tide of football interest that will lift the value of its Champions League and Europa League rights, which went on sale last month.

Uefa tendered rights to its club competitions in Canada on October 10, with first-round bids due on November 14. Telco Bell, which owns pay-television broadcasters RDS and TSN, is the strong favourite to acquire the rights as it seeks to complete its set of top-tier football rights. The rights will be sold by Team Marketing, Uefa's sales agent for its club competitions.

Bell has made premium football content a priority since losing out on National Hockey League rights – Canada's biggest sporting property – to rival telco Rogers from 2014-15 (*TV Sports Markets* 17:22).

It currently holds non-exclusive rights to the Uefa Champions League in a joint deal with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, worth about \$5m (€4.3m) per season. It also shares Europa League rights with beIN in a three-season deal over the same period, worth \$800,000 per season (*TV Sports Markets* 19:1).

Bell also holds rights to the English Premier League, from 2016-17 to 2018-19, and in January acquired exclusive English-language MLS rights in a five-year deal, from 2017 to 2021, worth between \$4m and \$5m per year – a significant overall uplift on the total value of these rights in the previous cycle.

Losing Champions League and Europa League rights to Rogers, or a new entrant such as OTT platform DAZN, would be a bitter blow.

Local experts believe Bell is now keener than ever to invest in football – both in terms of buying rights and in promoting the properties it already holds – in contrast to its attitude before 2014-15, when it carried a large amount of ice hockey and regarded football content as unimportant.

With Rogers owning almost all NHL rights – Bell still holds regional rights to some Canadian teams – sources say Bell now recognises the importance of cornering the football market.

MLS increase

In addition to Bell's exclusive English-language deal, Rogers' French-language pay-television broadcaster TVA Sports agreed a separate deal for exclusive French-language MLS rights for five years, from 2017 to 2021, in a deal thought to be worth between \$1m and \$1.5m per year.

It is thought the increase in MLS fees was down to two factors. First, the recent success of Toronto FC, and the growing popularity of Montreal Impact and Vancouver Whitecaps.

Toronto reached the MLS Cup final in 2016, and is currently competing in the 2017 Eastern Conference playoff finals. Attendances at the three Canadian clubs increased more than any other MLS teams from 2015 to 2016.

Regular-season Toronto FC matches averaged 93,000 television viewers in 2017, but its MLS Cup final match in 2016 was watched by 1.4m people, according to TSN. Vancouver Whitecaps regular-season matches averaged about 85,000 viewers in 2017, while Montreal Impact matches averaged about 80,000 in 2017.

These are strong increases on the previous season. Toronto's average for total viewership has increased by 57 per cent; the Vancouver Whitecaps 25 per cent; and Montreal Impact 10 per cent.

The second reason behind the increase was the league had a stronger negotiating position due to collectivisation. Local sources say combining regional and national packages made MLS a more attractive property to Bell, which is thought to have been the only bidder.

Previous deals

MLS rights in Canada were collectivised from 2017, having previously been sold in four separate packages from 2011 to 2016.

A national package sold by Soccer United Marketing, MLS's commercial arm, was acquired by Bell in a six-year deal, from 2011 to 2016, thought to be worth between \$750,000 and \$1m per year. This package included up to 30 regular-season matches per season involving Toronto FC and the Vancouver Whitecaps.

In addition, the three Canadian clubs individually sold rights to their matches that fell outside of the national package.

Bell and Rogers jointly acquired Toronto FC rights in a six-year deal, from 2011 to 2016, worth about \$1.2m per year. This included production costs, thought to account for about 25 per cent of the overall fee. The rights were sold to both telcos as they each own an equal stake in media group Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Toronto FC's owner.

The Whitecaps sold its regional rights in two separate deals over the period: first to Bell in a three-year deal from 2011 to 2013, thought to be worth over \$500,000 per year; then to Rogers in a three-year deal from 2014 to 2016, worth about \$700,000 per year. Production costs were not included in these deals.

Montreal Impact sold its rights to Rogers in a five-year deal, from 2012 to 2016, worth just under \$1m per year. Rogers exploited the rights on its French-language broadcaster TVA Sports. ◆

TV CHILE

CdF the target for Turner and Mediapro after Chilean alliance

By Callum McCarthy

Mediapro's agreement with Turner-owned Chilevisión to lead sales of Chilean national team rights is the first phase of a wider alliance between the agency and the media group, TV Sports Markets understands.

Commercial broadcaster Chilevisión will pay \$119m (€102.7m) for global media and marketing rights to the Chilean national team over four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22 (*TV Sports Markets* 21:15).

Local experts say Mediapro's agreement with Chilevisión – which will see the agency lead sales of international media rights and global marketing rights – is worth about \$95m.

The next phase of the alliance is expected to be a joint offer to acquire Canal del Fútbol. CdF is the commercial and pay-television broadcaster on which the Asociación Nacional de Fútbol Profesional, Chilean football's governing body, exploits rights to the top two tiers of Chilean club football.

The channel is 80-per-cent owned by the ANFP and 20-per-cent by channel operator Gestión de Televisión, owned by businessman Jorge Claro (*TV Sports Markets* 21:12). In April, the ANFP reached an initial agreement to buy Claro's stake and has until the end of the year to take up the option.

It is thought a bid of at least \$1.1bn will be necessary to acquire CdF. The ANFP ran a tender process for the broadcaster that concluded on September 30, and subsequently shortlisted Turner and media conglomerates Fox and Liberty Global for a further bidding process. All three made non-binding bids in the original tender.

Mediapro ambition

Despite the huge outlay needed to acquire CdF, the prospect of partnering with Turner to own and operate the broadcaster is thought to be appealing to Mediapro. The agency has seen other media groups make near-identical plays in Argentina and Ecuador.

Mediapro already owns and operates the pay-television Canal F1 Latin America channel, but has long sought greater involvement in channels, commercial rights sales and production in the region.

Multiple sources say the agency had partnered with pay-television broadcaster beIN Sports ahead of the broadcaster's attempted channel launch in Latin America. BeIN is yet to launch in the region after

failing to acquire Uefa club competition rights across Latin America in August 2014. Mediapro also unsuccessfully bid for rights to Argentina's Primera División earlier this year, which came with the opportunity to open a pay-television league channel.

After failing to gain a foothold in Argentina, local experts believe Chile is the next best territory for Mediapro to base its operations. Its representation of Chilean national-team rights will enable it to build relationships with major brands and broadcasters in Latin America, while showcasing its production abilities to other rights-holders in the region.

Chile is also attractive because of its robust economy and strong domestic league. The Chilean Primera División is widely seen as the fourth-strongest domestic league in South America, behind those in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia.

Local experts say channel launches are the most effective way for agencies to monetise local leagues in South America, with one source saying it is the only way for agencies to "gain full visibility of revenues" from the acquisition.

Turner and Fox partnered to acquire Argentina's Primera División rights and are thought certain to launch a pay-television broadcaster on the back of the acquisition. Similarly, the Tenfield agency, which owns Latin American pay-television broadcaster Gol TV, acquired rights to Ecuador's top-tier Primera Categoría Serie A and exploits the rights on its own channel.

National team deal

With Mediapro taking charge of international media rights and global marketing rights, Chilevisión's remaining fee for domestic media rights – about \$6m per season – is about 36 per cent more than it paid in a four-season deal from 2010-11 to 2013-14, worth an average of \$4.4m per season.

Commercial broadcaster Mega held global commercial rights to the Chilean national team in the previous four-season cycle, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, paying a total of \$106m. One informed source said the broadcaster lost about \$20m and as a result was less aggressive when bidding for the rights when they were sold in July.

Mediapro and Chilevisión will collaborate on exploitation of all rights, but the ANFP will continue to consider Chilevisión as its partner. Mediapro's key responsibilities will be to lead sales of international media and global marketing rights. International rights were previously sold by the Full Play agency.

Both Turner and Mediapro could produce Chile home matches, but experts believe Mediapro is the more likely of the two. Turner recently opened its own production facility in Santiago but Mediapro, via its Argentinian subsidiary Prom TV, has experience in producing at an international standard. Whichever option is taken, the ANFP's long-time production partner Chile Films will be displaced.

Chile international matches each cost between \$50,000 and \$80,000 to produce, depending on whether matches are produced in 4k or high definition. ◆

FOOTBALL

Sky pays premium for exclusive, eight-season Bundesliga deal

By David Svenson

- Sky buys Austrian Bundesliga rights, 2018-19 to 2025-26, for average of €37.5m per season
- From 2018-19 to 2021-22, Sky will pay an average of €34m per season
- From 2022-23 to 2025-26, in a four-season option, Sky will pay an average of €41m per season

Selling global rights exclusively to pay-television broadcaster Sky has netted the Austrian Bundesliga the biggest media-rights deal in the country's history.

The new eight-season deal with Sky, from 2018-19 to 2025-26, will be worth a total of about €300m (\$348m), an average of about €37.5m per season.

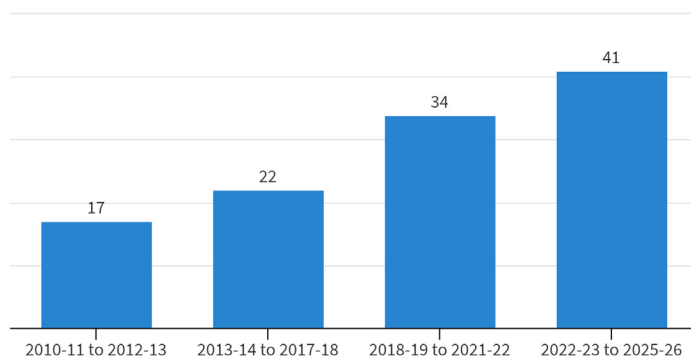
Sky will pay an average of €34m per season for the first four seasons. It has an option to take up the rights in the second four seasons for about €41m per season.

The new deal is yet to be finalised, as it requires the approval of Bundesliga clubs. The league is confident the agreement will be signed by the end of the year.

The Austrian Bundesliga currently earns about €22m per season from its domestic rights, split between deals with Sky and public-service broadcaster ORF. Both deals are from 2013-14 to 2017-18, with Sky paying about €10m per season and ORF about €12m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 21:16).

This was an increase on the previous three-season cycle, from 2010-11 to 2012-13, in which Sky and ORF paid a combined fee of about €17m per season.

Austrian Bundesliga, domestic rights value by cycle (€m per season)



Source: TV Sports Markets Rights Tracker

Note: The 2022-23 to 2025-26 cycle is an optional extension to the 2018-19 to 2021-22 deal

The league tendered its rights in a new cycle earlier this year, with bids due in July. The league was advised on the sale of its rights by the Profile Partners agency.

Sky's two main competitors for the rights were expected to be ORF and OTT platform DAZN, owned by digital media company Perform. DAZN was interested but did not bid, and ORF could not compete with the dramatic fee increase Sky was offering.

About half of Austrian Bundesliga club revenues come from sponsorship, so the desire for free-to-air coverage was strong. Sky will pay such a large increase to convince the league to move exclusively to pay-television. With Austrian ski association rights having recently been renewed by ORF until the end of 2019-20, the Bundesliga was the only premium property on the market, increasing the importance of the rights to Sky (*TV Sports Markets* 21:17).

Free-to-air coverage

Sky will sublicense a package of rights to a free-to-air broadcaster. The package will contain four live matches per season and highlights from each match-week. Allowing free-to-air coverage will help Sky promote the league and will appease Bundesliga clubs upset at the exclusive rights deal.

Several free-to-air broadcasters are interested in the package. ORF, and commercial broadcasters Puls 4 and Servus TV, are all considered possible bidders. It is unclear how aggressively ORF will bid for the package given it requested 14 live matches per season be made available.

Competition questions answered

The Sky deal has been given the all-clear by the Austrian federal competition authority, the Bundeswettbewerbsbehörde, after the agreement was referred to it by an unknown third-party citing concerns over the deal's duration.

The exclusivity of the Bundesliga deal with Sky has also been scrutinised by a separate body, the Austrian communications authority, KommAustria, which deemed there to be no problem.

Austrian media reports suggested ORF is behind the investigations. However, when contacted by *TV Sports Markets*, Martin Szerencsi, legal advisor to ORF, said: "This is not true, ORF are not pursuing legal action of any kind against Sky or the Austrian Bundesliga."

International rights

Sky's new deal also covers the league's international rights, though almost the entirety of its rights fee can be attributed to the domestic market. The league's international rights are currently held by betting and data-services company Sportradar.

Sky is keen to sell on the rights and will speak with agencies and broadcasters, but interest outside Austria is minimal. Most of the international rights value is thought to lie in the betting rights. ◆

CRICKET

New Zealand Cricket to return to screens in Indian subcontinent

By David Cook

- Star paying \$33m for New Zealand Cricket rights in Indian subcontinent, 2017-18 to 2019-20
- Previous deal for NZC rights was a one-off deal for an Indian tour in 2014, worth \$4m
- In the old deal, each India match was worth \$570,000; in the new deal each is worth \$2m

Two scheduled India tours has helped the Pitch International agency finally sell New Zealand Cricket rights in the Indian subcontinent after three years without a deal.

Pay-television broadcaster Star India will pay about \$33m (€28.4m) for the rights over three seasons, from 2017-18 to 2019-20 – an average of \$11m per season. Pitch has an eight-season deal in place to sell NZC's international rights, from 2012-13 to 2019-20, thought to be worth a total of between \$60m and \$70m.

There had been no interest from Indian broadcasters in New Zealand matches against other countries. The last deal for NZC rights in the country was a one-off agreement with pay-television broadcaster Sony Pictures Networks India covering India's 2014 tour.

The deal, finalised last month, came one month after Star acquired global Indian Premier League media rights over five years, from 2018 to 2022, for \$2.55bn (*TV Sports Markets* 21:16).

TV Sports Markets understands no other broadcasters bid for the rights, though Pitch considered selling several properties in its portfolio – including NZC rights – to pay-television broadcaster DSport in the summer. DSport was put off bidding for NZC rights due to the time at which matches would be aired in India. Sony was approached by Pitch, but showed no interest.

Once with Sony, now with Star

The deal covers the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, where Star will show content on its Star Cricket channel, which it operates on behalf of Fox Networks Group. Both Star and Fox are owned by 21st Century Fox.

Star will hold rights to all New Zealand men's and women's home international matches. The Test series between New Zealand and the West Indies, beginning on December 1, will be the first in the deal. About 95 per cent of the value of the deal is in matches between the New Zealand and India men's teams. Star will simulcast all matches on its Hotstar OTT service.

India's men's team will tour New Zealand from February to March 2019, and is expected to tour again in 2020. The first tour will consist of three Test matches, five One Day Internationals and one Twenty20 International. The second tour is expected to consist of five ODIs and one T20I.

NZC rights had gone unsold in India since the last men's team's tour of the country in 2014, for which Sony paid about \$4m. This included five ODIs and two Tests – an average of about \$570,000 per match. Star will pay an average of about \$2m per India match in the new deal.

However, that Sony deal is not considered a realistic benchmark for the value of the rights. NZC was rushed into the deal with Sony after its previous deal, with pay-television broadcaster Neo Sports, collapsed as a result of missed payments. Neo had agreed to pay \$60m for rights across Asia over seven years, from 2014 to 2020 (*TV Sports Markets* 18:2).

Sources close to Star say the broadcaster is still open to growing its cricket portfolio when rights are available at the right price. When Star did not bid to renew its Cricket Australia rights earlier this year, some observers suggested its deal for the IPL – cricket's most expensive property – had limited its interest in acquiring, and ability to acquire, other cricket rights (*TV Sports Markets* 21:19). ♦

RUGBY LEAGUE

NRL international value grows with OTT product set to launch

By David Cook

- Fox to pay \$2.5m per year for NRL international rights from 2018 to 2022
- Fox has sold on all its rights, excluding the US and the UK, to IMG for \$1.5m per year
- NRL international rights from 2013 to 2017 were held by IMG in a deal worth \$2m per year

Australia's National Rugby League increased the value of its international rights by 25 per cent in a multi-party deal that will lead to the creation of an international OTT platform.

Pay-television broadcaster Fox Sports will pay about \$2.5m (€2.2m) per year in a five-year deal, from 2018 to 2022, for all NRL rights outside Australia and New Zealand.

In the current cycle, the IMG agency holds NRL international rights for five years, from 2013 to 2017, in a deal worth \$2m per year. Both deals are buyouts.

IMG has held on to most of its rights in the new cycle as Fox has sold on rights to the agency in all markets outside the US and UK. IMG will pay Fox about \$1.5m per year for the duration of Fox's deal.

The majority of the value of IMG's deal is for rights in the Pacific Islands. Rugby league is a major sport in the region and is the only territory in which IMG will have exclusive rights.

In all other international territories, NRL matches will also be shown on new OTT platform Watch NRL. Fox has developed the platform as part of its international rights agreement with the NRL and will be responsible for its rollout. Watch NRL will not launch in the Pacific Islands due to the lack of high-speed broadband infrastructure in the region.

Fox is in discussions about selling UK rights to either pay-television broadcaster Sky or Premier Sports, the incumbent. It has distributed rights in the US to its American equivalent, Fox Sports US, which also held rights in the country from 2014 to 2017.

It is understood IMG is yet to sell on any rights. Outside the Pacific Islands, the agency will be able to sell three regular-season matches per week, plus the end-of-season play-offs.

Discussions over a new deal

The NRL, Fox and IMG began discussing the distribution of international rights in May this year. The deal was agreed in mid-October.

The Lagardère Sports agency also showed interest in the rights, but entered discussions with the NRL after talks with Fox and IMG had reached an advanced stage.

Fox felt IMG would be in a stronger position to sell rights in international territories outside the US and UK, a view shared by the NRL. The final structure of the international rights deals was agreed by all three parties.

The NRL believes it can maximise reach and exposure via Fox's relationship with Fox Sports US and Sky in the UK. Fox's agreement to develop the OTT platform was also a key factor in completing the deal.

The plan for Watch NRL

Plans for Fox to develop an OTT platform were first discussed when Fox agreed its deal for the NRL's domestic rights in November 2015. Fox will pay about \$142m per year for non-exclusive domestic rights for five years, from 2018 to 2022 (*TV Sports Markets* 19:22).

Watch NRL will show all eight matches per week and all finals series matches. Fox will manage the platform. It is yet to decide on price structures but plans to sell weekly, monthly and annual packages.

The NRL wanted Fox to develop the OTT platform as Fox has a similar agreement with the Aussie rules Australian Football League. The two leagues closely monitor each other's strategies and the NRL wants to compete with the AFL digitally. ◆

TV GREECE

Uefa mulling over potential pay-TV exclusivity switch in Greece

By David Svenson

Uefa is considering selling Champions League and Europa League rights in a new cycle exclusively to a pay-television broadcaster to maximise value in Greece.

Team Marketing, the exclusive sales agent for Uefa's club competitions, will see presentations from interested broadcasters on November 20, with bids due by December 6.

The Greek Uefa Champions League tender offers exclusive rights to matches played on particular days – either Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

Uefa is open to selling its rights exclusively to a pay-television operator, as it has already done in several territories, such as the UK, France and Spain (*TV Sports Markets* 21:5, 21:8, 21:12).

In the current cycle, from 2015-16 to 2017-18, Uefa earns a total of €38.3m (\$44.4m) per season for its Champions League and Europa League rights in Greece.

Pay-television broadcaster Cosmote pays €35m per season for rights to show all Champions League matches, the majority of which are exclusive, and for exclusive Europa League matches. State broadcaster ERT, then Nerit, pays €3.3m per season for non-exclusive rights to 13 Champions League matches per season (*TV Sports Markets* 18:22).

This represented an increase of almost 19 per cent on the value of Champions League and Europa League rights in the 2012-13 to 2014-15 cycle, in which Uefa earned a total of about €32.3m per season.

The pay-television market in Greece is dominated by Cosmote and rival Nova, with market experts predicting Cosmote is the most likely to win the rights. The current fee is thought to be high and is likely to stay flat or fall in the new cycle.

ERT is thought to be the most likely buyer of a free-to-air package if Uefa does not agree an exclusive pay-television deal.

In other markets, Uefa has been willing to move exclusively to pay-television when a significant increase in rights fee has been offered. Current market conditions in Greece suggest this is unlikely, while ERT has recently shown more aggression when bidding for sports rights.

Recent activity in Greece

ERT acquired rights to the 2018 Fifa World Cup for €10m earlier this year, proving its willingness to buy top football properties (*TV Sports Markets* 21:19).

ERT has also acquired domestic basketball rights: it took over rights to the Greek Basketball League – excluding Panathinaikos, Olympiacos and AEK Athens – from Nova. The ERT deal, which covers matches of the other 11 clubs in the league, is worth about €1.55m and is for the 2017-18 season only.

The previous two-season deal with Nova, covering 2015-16 and 2016-17, was worth about €1.5m per season plus a €400,000-per-season production fee.

Nova has also lost rights to home matches played by Panathinaikos, which it held in 2015-16 and 2016-17 in a deal worth about €1.1m per season (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17). These rights have been acquired by Cosmote, for the 2017-18 season only, for a small increase.

Nova has renewed its deal for Wimbledon tennis rights for three years, from 2017 to 2019, worth about €450,000 per year. This is an increase of about 13 per cent on the €400,000 per year Nova paid from 2014 to 2016.

Rights to the other three tennis grand slams are held by sports broadcaster Eurosport in pan-European deals. Cosmote has rights to ATP World Tour 1000 and 500 events, as well as the ATP Finals in a four-year deal from 2017 to 2020.

Problems brewing for the Superleague

Greek media reports suggest major football club Panathinaikos' financial problems are threatening its involvement in the Greek Superleague.

Nova, which holds domestic rights to the Superleague from 2017-18 to 2018-19, will seek to renegotiate its deal if Panathinaikos drops out of the league.

The broadcaster has previously used league difficulties to secure a better deal. In 2015, after the Greek government suspended football in the country due to fan violence, Nova approached the league to renew its deal on more favourable terms (*TV Sports Markets* 19:9). ◆

PARALYMPIC GAMES

IPC renews key EBU deal which ensures wide European coverage

By Robin Jellis

The International Paralympic Committee secured an increased rights fee and wider coverage from its renewal with the European Broadcasting Union last month.

The deal will cover the 2018 winter and 2020 summer Games. The EBU – Europe’s consortium of public-service broadcasters – will pay the IPC a fee of close to €2m (\$2.3m) for its rights.

This represents an increase of more than 10 per cent on the value of the EBU’s deal with the IPC covering the 2014 winter and 2016 summer Games.

The new EBU deal covers all of Europe, except the UK and Russia. The biggest guarantors of the deal are understood to be public-service broadcasters in Germany (ARD/ZDF), France (France Télévisions), Sweden (SVT), Norway (NRK), Spain (TVE) and Italy (Rai).

In the UK, rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games have already been sold to commercial broadcaster Channel 4 in a deal worth about £9m (€10.2m/\$11.8m) (*TV Sports Markets* 20:17).

Rights in Russia have been excluded from the EBU deal due to the uncertainty of the participation of Russian athletes. Russian Paralympians were banned from competing at the 2016 Games due to alleged state-sponsored doping.

Rights to the 2016 Games in Russia were included in the previous EBU deal. Rights to the 2014 Games in the country were sold separately by the Sochi organising committee.

Alexis Schäfer, IPC commercial and marketing director, told *TV Sports Markets* this week: “We had discussions with agencies for various territories, but we decided early against this option. We would like to work on a partnership as a business model, where we work with partners to promote the Games and give athletes more visibility. There is longevity to that kind of partnership.

“If you change partner often you may gain commercially but may also lose other long-term partnership benefits. We are not in a position where this would make a whole lot of sense. The EBU has taken great steps.

“Even if it makes commercial sense, is it worth the additional money to leave the partnership? For us, the long-term relationship was much more important, as was the growing importance they are placing on the Paralympic Games.

“Financially we felt that the deal made sense. From the discussions we had internally we felt that getting that from the EBU was good and sensible.”

The EBU and IPC are thought to have begun direct conversations about a renewal for the 2018-2020 cycle in 2015. There was no tender for the rights.

Increased level of coverage

A total of 54 EBU members covered the 2016 Games. The IPC and EBU have said 25 members have already committed to showing both the 2018 and 2020 Games.

Although there is less broadcaster interest in the winter Games, about 400 hours of live programming will be available in 2018, a 25-per-cent increase on the amount available in 2014.

The 2014-2016 cycle was the first time Paralympic Games media rights were sold by the IPC. Before then, rights to each Games were sold directly by each organising committee. ◆

FOOTBALL

IMG offer tempts Uefa into rare agency deal covering Indonesia

By David Cook

Uefa has earned a healthy increase in the value of its national team rights in a new deal covering Indonesia with the IMG agency.

IMG will pay just under \$30m (€25.8m) for rights to: Euro 2020; the European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22; and the Uefa Nations League in 2018-19 and 2020-21. About two-thirds of the value is for Euro 2020. While the deal was agreed in March, it was announced by IMG on November 2.

CAA Eleven, Uefa's sales agent for its national team rights, sold European Championship and European Qualifier rights separately in the current cycle.

Media group MNC paid about \$30m for rights to Euro 2012 and Euro 2016, an average of \$15m per tournament. It acquired European Qualifier rights, from 2014-15 to 2017-18, in a deal worth about \$5m.

The value of the European Championship in the new deal has increased about 33 per cent on a per-tournament basis. The European Qualifiers and the first two editions of the Nations League are valued at about \$10m.

The increase has been driven by growing interest in football in the country since the rights were last sold. Free-to-air coverage has been particularly helpful in growing interest in the properties.

Nations League piques IMG interest

IMG's interest was driven by the addition of the Nations League, which it believes has transformed Uefa's national team properties.

The Nations League is effectively a replacement for international friendlies that ensures European national teams play for a trophy every year. The competition will also act as an extension to the European Qualifiers, as four teams will qualify for Euro 2020 via the Nations League.

While IMG is yet to sell the rights on, it has received offers and expects deals to be agreed by the end of the first quarter of 2018. It will sell free-to-air, pay-television and digital rights separately. ◆

OLYMPIC GAMES

TVR to sign off 2018/2020 Games deal for Romania and Moldova

By Robin Jellis

TVR is in the process of completing its deal for rights to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic Games in Romania.

It is understood the Romanian public-service broadcaster will pay about €2.2m (\$2.5m) to acquire rights to both Games in the country.

The sublicensing deal has been struck with sports broadcaster Eurosport, which holds rights to the Olympic Games across Europe between 2018 and 2024 in a deal worth €1.3bn (*TV Sports Markets* 19:13).

TVR faced no competition for the rights. There was limited interest from other broadcasters given the scheduling demands, and as the Games are one-off events lasting only a few weeks.

The deal represents an increase in value of about 10 per cent compared to when Olympic Games rights were last sold in the country. TVR paid about €2m for rights to the 2014 and 2016 Games in a deal with the Sportfive agency, which has since been brought under the Lagardère Sports banner.

TVR's deal will provide it with just over 100 hours of coverage from the 2018 winter Games and about 250 hours at the 2020 summer Games. The International Olympic Committee's minimum requirement for free-to-air coverage is 100 hours at a winter Games and 200 hours at a summer Games.

As part of the sublicensing agreement with TVR, Eurosport will retain the right to show Olympics coverage on its pay-television channels in the country.

TV Sports Markets understands the TVR deal also covers rights in neighbouring Moldova: coverage will be shown on the TVR Moldova channel. TVR acquired these rights as it is seeking to improve the prestige of the channel.

TVR is understood to have paid an additional fee of just under €300,000 to Eurosport for rights to the 2018 and 2020 Games in Moldova. The 2014 and 2016 Games were shown in the country by public-service broadcaster TRM. ◆

RUGBY UNION

SBS retains Australian tour rights amid minimal free-to-air interest

By David Cook

Australian public-service broadcaster SBS has renewed its deal for non-exclusive rights to the national rugby union team's ongoing matches for roughly the same annual fee.

SBS will pay about \$50,000 (€43,000) per year over two years, 2017 and 2018. The deal covers this year's matches against Wales, England and Scotland. Australia is guaranteed to play England next year.

The fee is flat on the previous SBS deal which covered the 2016 tour only and was worth about \$50,000. Last year's deal covered matches against Wales, Scotland, France and Ireland. However, the fee has slightly increased on a per-match basis compared to the 2016 deal, which covered four matches.

Both deals were agreed with the Pitch International agency, which holds international rights to the home matches of all of Australia's opponents this year in separate deals (*TV Sports Markets* 20:19). SBS approached Pitch about the rights in late summer and the deal was agreed in late October.

All Test matches played by the national team in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Europe are covered by Australia's anti-siphoning list, and must be offered to a free-to-air broadcaster.

Pitch has sold pay-television rights in Australia to the same matches to beIN Sports. BeIN pays between \$30,000 and \$40,000 per match for England's home matches.

A source close to SBS said it would have been interested in buying the rights regardless of whether the matches were on the anti-siphoning list or not. SBS feels there is enough of a rugby union fanbase in Australia to justify purchasing the rights and it was satisfied with feedback from viewers when showing the matches last year. The low cost of the matches also made the property attractive to SBS.

Pitch approached other free-to-air broadcasters before it entered talks with SBS. It struggled to sell the rights and failed to secure much of an increase as no other broadcasters showed any interest.

There were three reasons for this. First, the lack of exclusivity makes the rights less attractive to free-to-air broadcasters.

Second, the matches are played in the early hours of the morning Australia time. Third, interest in, and support for, the Australian national team has dipped in recent years. ◆

DEALS ROUND-UP

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

FOOTBALL

- ◆ Brazilian commercial broadcaster SBT acquired rights to the Copa do Nordeste, a regional club competition. SBT agreed the deal with sports broadcaster Esporte Interativo, which holds rights to the tournament until 2022. SBT's deal will begin in 2018.
- ◆ The IMG agency agreed an exclusive deal with Uefa to sell rights in Indonesia to: Euro 2020; European Qualifiers from 2018-19 to 2021-22; and the Nations League ([page 37](#)).
- ◆ Mexican media group Televisa agreed a five-year extension to its deal with Liga MX club Tigres for its home matches in all competitions.
- ◆ Free-to-air broadcaster Chilevisión struck a deal with the Mediapro agency covering Chile's national team matches ([page 25](#)).
- ◆ English Premier League club Manchester City struck a deal with internet company Amazon for the production of a documentary series for the latter's Prime subscription service. The series will be available in 2018.
- ◆ US pay-television broadcaster Univision Deportes struck a three-season deal, from 2017-18 to 2019-20, for rights to three German Bundesliga matches per week via a sublicensing deal with the Fox Deportes division of the Fox network.
- ◆ Online streaming service Netflix agreed a deal with Argentinian Superliga club Boca Juniors. Netflix will produce a four-part documentary series focusing on Boca's pre-season build-up.
- ◆ Russian state-controlled commercial broadcaster Channel One acquired rights to the national team's friendly matches against Argentina on November 11 and Spain on November 14. The matches were also live-streamed by social media platforms VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.
- ◆ The South American Football Confederation (Conmebol) announced it had sent the Datisa agency notice of its decision to terminate a deal signed in 2013. Datisa's deal was for broadcast and sponsorship rights to the 2019 and 2023 editions of the Copa América national team tournament.
- ◆ Sportsfix, an OTT service in Southeast Asia, acquired rights in Malaysia for Serie A, Italy's top tier. Sportsfix will stream three matches per week during the 2017-18 season.
- ◆ Spanish-language sports broadcaster Telemundo Deportes acquired rights in the US to the 2017 Fifa Club World Cup, and agreed a deal to show the second leg of the Fifa World Cup play-off between Peru and New Zealand.
- ◆ French commercial broadcaster M6 agreed a five-season deal, from 2018-29 to 2022-23, for rights to matches featuring the French women's national team.
- ◆ French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus struck a five-season deal, from 2018-19 to 2022-23, for rights to the D1 top women's domestic division, and matches featuring the French men's national youth teams.

DEALS ROUND-UP

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

OTHER SPORTS

- ◆ **Basketball:** Brazilian broadcaster Rede Bandeirantes agreed an extension to its rights deal with the Brazilian Basketball League to cover its top-tier club competition, the NBB ([page 19](#)).
- ◆ **Basketball:** Daily fantasy sports operator DraftKings expanded a deal in the US and Canada with Euroleague Basketball that will grant DraftKings live digital rights to the Euroleague, European basketball's top-tier. DraftKings is expected to begin streaming games in the first quarter of 2018.
- ◆ **Basketball:** The Turner Sports division of US cable-television broadcaster Turner Broadcasting System and technology company Intel agreed a multi-year deal to jointly offer virtual-reality coverage of NBA games. Marquee NBA games broadcast on Turner's TNT network will receive VR coverage, beginning with the 2018 NBA All-Star Game in February.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Finnish telco Elisa extended its rights deal for Liga ACB, Spain's top division.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Liga ACB agreed a deal in Asia and Oceania with social media platform Facebook for rights to the game between Real Madrid and Barcelona, played on November 12.
- ◆ **Basketball:** Liga ACB agreed a deal with Chinese internet company Tencent for live streaming coverage of the game between Real Madrid and Barcelona.
- ◆ **Combat Sports:** Telekom Sport, the television service operated by German telco Deutsche Telekom, struck a deal with 7Sports, the sports business division of German media group ProSiebenSat.1, for 7Sports' 'Fighting' package, which includes live and video-on-demand combat sports content.
- ◆ **Cricket:** Indian pay-television broadcaster Star India agreed a three-season deal with New Zealand Cricket ([page 29](#)).
- ◆ **Cricket:** Cricket Australia, Australia's cricketing governing body, agreed a deal with financial services company Commonwealth Bank to provide a global live stream of a women's Ashes Test. The day-night Test between Australia and England, which began on November 9, was made available in high definition via the Cricket Live platform, and globally via cricket.com.au.
- ◆ **Cricket:** BeIN Media Group struck a long-term deal with Cricket Australia in the Middle East and North Africa ([page 8](#)).
- ◆ **Darts:** International sports broadcaster Eleven Sports acquired rights in Belgium to the Professional Darts Corporation's 2017-18 World Darts Championship and the 2018 World Cup of Darts.
- ◆ **Golf:** The European Tour provided live coverage of its Hero Challenge event on November 14 via social media platform Twitter.
- ◆ **Handball:** The MP & Silva agency secured global media rights for the International Handball Federation's men's and women's World Championships in 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2025.

DEALS ROUND-UP

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

- ◆ **Hockey:** Pay-television broadcaster Sky New Zealand struck a deal with the International Hockey Federation (FIH) for rights to the Women's Hockey World League Final event in Auckland. Sky will serve as the event's host broadcaster.
- ◆ **Hockey:** The FIH agreed a deal with video-sharing platform YouTube for live digital rights to the Hockey World League Finals competitions. The deal covers all territories where no broadcast agreement is in place. Matches will be streamed on pay-per-view.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** The New York Racing Association partnered with FS1, a channel operated by the Fox Sports division of US network Fox, to broadcast this year's Melbourne Cup on November 3.
- ◆ **Horse Racing:** Racecourse Media Group signed a two-year extension to its deal with Dubai's Meydan Group. RMG will produce and distribute the full season of events at Meydan Racecourse.
- ◆ **Ice Hockey:** Superswiss, which provides pay-television channels in the US, struck a deal with the Deutsche Eishockey Liga, Germany's top division, to include delayed broadcasts of games from the 2017-18 season.
- ◆ **Ice Skating:** Tencent signed an exclusive long-term digital rights deal with the Chinese Skating Association.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** Australian public-service broadcaster SBS acquired rights to the national team's tour of the UK ([page 39](#)).
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** The CBS Sports division of US network CBS signed a multi-year deal with Major League Rugby, a new US-based competition. CBS Sports will show coverage of the league's inaugural 2018 season.
- ◆ **Rugby Union:** Fijian pay-television broadcaster Sky Pacific acquired a package of rights for a host of autumn internationals. Fiji's match against Ireland will be shown live on November 18, but games against Italy on November 11 and Canada on November 26 will not be broadcast live. Sky acquired live rights to Scotland vs. Samoa and Wales vs. Australia on November 11; England vs. Australia on November 18; England vs. Samoa and Ireland vs. Argentina on November 25; and Wales vs. South Africa on December 2.
- ◆ **Skiing:** Ski Sport Finland signed a long-term extension to its international rights deal with the Infront Sports & Media agency ([page 12](#)).
- ◆ **Snooker:** International sports broadcaster Eurosport struck a deal with World Snooker for rights to the Shanghai Masters event, which runs from November 13-18.
- ◆ **Snooker:** Eleven Sports acquired rights in Belgium to the Champion of Champions tournament, which ran from November 6-12.
- ◆ **Table Tennis:** Swedish public-service broadcaster SVT acquired live rights to the International Table Tennis Federation's 2018 World Team Championships, which will be held in Halmstad, Sweden. SVT will also broadcast the finals of the ITTF World Tour Swedish Open in Stockholm from November 13-19.

DEALS ROUND-UP

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

◆ **Tennis:** UK public-service broadcaster the BBC extended its deal for ATP Finals rights to cover 2019 and 2020.

◆ **Tennis:** Eurosport agreed a five-year deal, from 2018 to 2022, for exclusive rights across Europe to the US Open grand slam tournament. The deal excludes the UK and Ireland.

◆ **US College Sport:** CBS Sports acquired rights to the Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic, to be held on December 1 and 2.

◆ **US College Sport:** The IMG agency signed a 10-year deal for media rights to all George Washington University athletics department events.

◆ **Wrestling:** Indian pay-television broadcaster DSport acquired rights to the New Japan Pro Wrestling series.

MEDIA RIGHTS NEGOTIATIONS

◆ The Ligue de Football Professionnel, which operates the French football league, opted to delay launching a sales process for the next cycle of domestic rights for Ligue 1, the country's top division, until the first quarter of 2018. The tender will cover rights for four seasons, from 2020-21 to 2023-24.

◆ European football's governing body Uefa launched tender processes for rights to its Champions League and Europa League club competitions in the Czech Republic and Greece. The Champions League tenders include rights for three seasons, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, and includes the Super Cup games in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Europa League tenders cover the same

three seasons. Bids are due at 10am CET on December 4 in the Czech Republic, and on December 6 for Greece ([page 33](#)).

◆ European Professional Club Rugby, the governing body for club rugby union in Europe, launched a tender process for international rights to its Champions Cup and Challenge Cup competitions. The tender covers rights for four seasons, from 2018-19 to 2021-22.

◆ The Austrian Bundesliga, the top division of football in the country, maintained its tender process for its latest domestic rights deal was valid amid reports public-service broadcaster ORF is considering legal action over the agreement ([page 27](#)).

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

- ◆ The NBC Sports Group division of US media company NBCUniversal partnered with NBA basketball team the Portland Trail Blazers to trial a new direct-to-consumer media product during 2017-18. 'Blazers Pass' will allow fans residing in the team's regional territory to purchase 15 live games during the season.
- ◆ US network CBS said its planned OTT sports service will be named CBS Sports HQ and will launch in the coming months.
- ◆ Walt Disney, the parent company of international sports broadcaster ESPN, reportedly held talks to acquire most of the assets of rival media company 21st Century Fox. Talks are said to have focused on a deal that would include Fox's movie studio, television production and international assets. Any deal would not include the Fox network, Fox Sports or Fox News. The transaction would also exclude Fox's local broadcasting affiliates.
- ◆ US OTT streaming service fuboTV agreed a multi-year deal to carry programming from regional sports network NESN, which has exclusive regional rights to the games of MLB team the Boston Red Sox and NHL ice hockey franchise the Boston Bruins. NESN will be made available to fubo Premier subscribers throughout the network's catchment area, which includes Connecticut (excluding Fairfield County), Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.
- ◆ ESPN expanded its deal with Snap Inc., the parent company of social media platform Snapchat, granting the latter rights to news programme *SportsCenter* for the next two years.
- ◆ DraftKings struck a deal with MSG Networks, which owns and operates the MSG Network and MSG Plus US regional sports and entertainment channels. DraftKings Fantasy Live will broadcast on MSG Plus and will be available via MSG GO, the live streaming and video-on-demand platform operated by MSG Networks.
- ◆ Canadian entertainment and media company Cineplex struck a deal with the NFL for rights to broadcast live games in its cinemas for the next three years. Games will initially be broadcast to 15 theatres across Canada and will expand to 50 locations for Super Bowl 52.
- ◆ UK public-service broadcaster the BBC said it would boost its live sports coverage by up to 1,000 hours per year as part of a wider strategy to transform its approach. Early rounds of football's FA Cup will be streamed live as well as more matches from the Wimbledon grand slam tennis tournament and fixtures from football's Women's Super League. The *Guardian* newspaper said Olympic sports including hockey, swimming and basketball would also benefit from the strategy.
- ◆ UK media services provider Arqiva abandoned plans for a flotation on the London Stock Exchange, two weeks after announcing its intention to float.
- ◆ Media group Discovery Communications' German free-to-air channel, TLC, will show live coverage of the 2018 winter Olympic Games.
- ◆ ESPN Plus will be the name of the broadcaster's new video-streaming service that will launch in spring 2018.

INDUSTRY NEWS IN BRIEF

NOVEMBER 2 TO 15

◆ The Ginx Esports TV channel agreed a carriage deal in Italy with pay-television broadcaster Sky.

◆ French pay-television broadcaster Canal Plus is to show matches from the top divisions of domestic football and rugby union on its commercial broadcaster C8.

◆ Chinese online streaming platform Tencent acquired a 12-per cent-stake in Snap Inc. Snap said in its quarterly report on November 8 that Tencent had bought 145.8m shares of its non-voting Class A stock on the open market.

◆ Seven chief executive Tim Worner has said some of the Australian commercial broadcaster's sports-rights acquisitions will deliver a lower-than-expected return on investment. Worner reflected on Seven's "disappointing" financial results that were announced in August, with a full-year net loss of A\$744.3m (€490m/\$571m) marking a significant fall from a net profit of A\$184.3m the previous year.

◆ A series of leading media companies paid bribes to secure multi-year football rights deals, according to the testimony of a prosecution witness in the ongoing US football corruption trial. Alejandro Burzaco, the former chief executive officer of the Torneos y Competencias agency, claimed US broadcaster Fox Sports, Televisa in Mexico, Brazilian media group Globo, the Full Play Argentina agency and the Traffic Group agency in Brazil were among those to have paid bribes. Globo denied the allegations, while Televisa said it would need to know more about the testimony before commenting. Fox Sports did not offer an immediate comment.

INDUSTRY MOVES

◆ Bob Bowman, president of business and media at the MLB, will step down from the role when his contract expires next month. Bowman presided over Bamtech, the video technology business of MLB Advanced Media, and the league's interactive media and internet subsidiary.

◆ Robert Klein will succeed Jörg Daubitzer as chief executive of the Bundesliga International division of the German football league on January 1. Bundesliga International is responsible for international media-rights sales for the Bundesliga and second-tier 2. Bundesliga, as well as sponsorship and licensing deals.

◆ After founder Patrick Drahi moved to regain control of telco Altice, operator of pay-television broadcaster SFR Sport, Altice chief executive Michel Combes resigned from his position. Drahi was appointed president of the board of Altice. Dexter Goei was appointed as Altice chief executive. Dennis Okhuijsen was appointed Altice Europe chief executive.

◆ Alain Weill, SFR Media chief executive, was appointed SFR Group chairman and chief executive, and Altice Media chief operating officer.